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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0024
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 1693
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0874
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0064
RUEHMU/AMEMBASSY MANAGUA PRIORITY 0536
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW PRIORITY 0081
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 4775
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 0388
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA PRIORITY 0163
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 000128

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STATE FOR WHA/CAR

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/23/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [EINV](#) [PARM](#) [PINR](#) [SNAR](#) [VE](#) [DR](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES VENZUELA WITH COLOMBIAN
AMBASSADOR

Classified By: ECOPOL COUNSELOR DAN BELLEGARDE FOR REASONS 1.4(b), (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: Ambassador Fannin and Mrs. Fannin met Colombian Ambassador Luis Emilio Sierra and his wife Liliana Martinez de Sierra for a courtesy call. During the meeting Ambassador Fannin inquired as to the extent of Venezuelan influence in the Dominican Republic. Sierra stated that there is growing concern over Venezuela's influence in the country in several areas, specifically regarding drug transshipments and FARC ties with local individuals. Sierra's comments may be a bit overstated, but he is sincerely worried about what he sees as the growing power of criminal elements in the country. End Summary.

¶2. (C) According to Sierra, the Petrocaribe agreement, wherein Venezuela sells petroleum to the DR with very favorable and generous repayment terms, is increasing Venezuela's influence in the DR. President Fernandez attended a recent Petrocaribe summit in Cuba, highlighting the importance of this agreement for the country.

¶3. (C) Sierra stated that there is one Dominican presidential candidate, Pedro de Jesus Candelier who is open and candid about his links with Venezuela. (Note: Candelier is in 5th place in the polls.) In addition, there are photos of a Dominican international public relations officer for a Dominican political party with Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) leaders. In some of the photos, this individual, who Sierra did not identify further, is seen donning a guerrilla outfit. Although the GODR is aware of this individual's activities, GODR does not have any legal proceedings against this individual. The GOC is working with Interpol to investigate the matter.

¶4. (C) Sierra said that drug transshipment through the country has increased, with up to ninety five percent coming out of Venezuela. The other five percent comes from Colombia, which he points out has been reduced considerably due to the GOC's efforts in air and sea interdictions.

¶5. (C) Sierra also expressed concern regarding Haiti, whose unstable government and limited infrastructure and resources have resulted in an increase in drug transshipments.

¶6. (C) Sierra stated that Dominicans involved in the drug trade are paid in kind, e.g. for every 100 kilos of cocaine, the Dominican receives 10 kilos to sell locally. This has resulted in an increase in local drug trafficking, addiction and abuse rates, as well as violent crime in the country.

¶7. (C) Sierra said that the FARC uses drug profits to buy arms and precursor chemicals for drug production. Arms are bought from countries such as Venezuela, Ecuador, Nicaragua and the former Soviet Union. In addition to arms, technical expertise is also solicited from other actors, pointing out some Irish Republican Army involvement in training the FARC in making explosive devices. Sierra expressed concern that drug trafficking revenue could also be used to finance terrorist groups.

¶8. (C) Colombia suffered and paid a high price in its war on drugs. The corruption and violence associated with the drug trade extended to all facets of Colombian society, affecting presidential candidates, judges, legislators, and civilians. Sierra warns the same could occur in the DR if drug trafficking is not dealt with appropriately by the GODR. A concern is the GODR is not acknowledging the increasing severity of the drug trade and has not taken appropriate steps to stem its increasing influence in Dominican society.

¶9. (C) Ambassador Fannin pledged continuing support to combat drug trafficking. He told Sierra he was optimistic that the recent meeting between INL DAS Christy McCampbell and officials from the National Directorate for Drug Control (DNCD) and the Dominican Customs director will yield more support to combat the problem.

¶10. (C) COMMENT: Given the poor state of Colombian-Venezuelan relations, Sierra's comments about Venezuelan influence in the Dominican Republic are not surprising and perhaps a bit overstated. However, he is sincerely worried about the growing power of the drug trade and that this may have the same corrosive effect here that it did in his native Colombia.

FANNIN